Ar. Charlett.
From the Author.
May. 15. 96.

Dr *WILLIAMS*'s SIXTH SERMON AT Mr. BOYL's Lecture, 1695.

6

The Divine Authority of the Scriptures.

A

SERMON

Preached at

St. *Martins in the Fields*, Sept. 2. 1695.

BEING THE

Sixth of the LECTURE

For the ſaid YEAR,

Founded by the Honourable

ROBERT BOYLE, Eſquire.

By *JOHN WILLIAMS*, D. D.
Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majeſty.

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Heb. I. 1, 2.

God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son, &c.

IN theſe words we have (as has been obſerved)

1. A deſcription of Revelation, 'tis God's *ſpeaking*, or declaring his Will to Mankind.

2. The Certainty of that Revelation, 'tis by way of Declaration, *God who at ſundry times, and in divers manners ſpake*, &c.

3. The Order obſerved in delivering that Revelation, as to Time, Manner, and Perſons; *In time paſt by the Prophets*, and *in the laſt days by his Son.*

4. The Concluſion and Perfection of that Revelation, 'tis *in the laſt days by his Son.*

Under the Second I have ſhewed,

1. That there has been ſuch a Revelation.
2. That the Scripture is of Divine Revelation, and has upon it the Characters belonging to ſuch Revelation.

For the better diſpoſing of what I had to ſay
Serm. V. under this Head, I propoſed Four Queſtions to be reſolved, *viz.*

Q. 1. How we can prove the Matter of Scripture to be true?

Q. 2. How we can prove the Matter of Scripture to have been of Divine Revelation?

Q. 3. How we can prove the Books of Scripture to have been of Divine Inſpiration?

Q. 4. How we prove theſe Books that are now extant, and received by the Chriſtian Church as Canonical, to be thoſe very Books?

I have already Treated of the Two former, and ſhall now take the Two latter into Conſideration.

Where we may obſerve ſomewhat as to the Writers, and then as to Inſpiration.

1. As

1. As to the Writers; of whom we may reckon Three ſorts.

(1.) Merely Human; ſuch as St. *Luke* ſpeaks of, that out of a good and pious intent, *took in hand to ſet forth in order a declaration of thoſe things which were moſt ſurely believed.* And this may be done without any material Error by Perſons duly qualified for it. Luk. 1. 1.

(2.) Thoſe that had what they wrote immediately dictated, or at leaſt approved by ſuch Perſons as were inſpired. So *Euſebius* ſaith that the Goſpel of St. *Mark* was approved by St. *Peter*, and St. *Luke*'s by St. *Paul*. Hiſt. Eccles. *l.* 2. *c.* 15. *l.* 5. *c.* 8.

(3.) Such as were immediately Inſpired in the writing, as St. *Peter* and the reſt of the Divine Writers are ſuppoſed to have been.

Now though the firſt of theſe may be ſufficient in ordinary caſes, and of good uſe in the extraordinary, where there is no better; yet where the Salvation of Mankind is concerned, there is ſomewhat farther neceſſary, and that is, that the Perſons that write ſhould be aſſiſted and guided by the Holy Spirit of God, or write by the direction and approbation of thoſe that are Inſpired.

2. As to the Inſpiration, that is Twofold:

(1.) Either when the Matter, Words, and Order, are immediately Dictated by God himſelf;

Exod. 20. 1, 22. himself; as the Decalogue was, and all that was Revealed by Voice; for then it was as Discourse with us.

(2.) Or, When Persons Selected wrote by Direction or Command from God, what was Revealed to them, as to the Matter only, whether by way of Declaration, or Representation.

In which last case the Persons Inspired took their own way; which is the reason of the difference in Style and Phrase between their several Compositions; that, for example, *Isaiah* writ in a lofty courtly Style; and that *Amos*, a Herdsman, writ after a more Rustical way. So *Erasmus* saith of St. *Luke*, that he writ in a purer and clearer Style, because of his skill in the Greek Tongue.

Here the Office of the Divine Spirit was to suggest the Matter, or to represent the case, to assist and supervise, so that no Error should be in the Original Copy; though he left each to the liberty of their own way in expressing it. As if we were to send several Messengers upon the same Errand, we deliver the Message to them, and tell them what they are to say; but leave every one of them to express it as they think fit, and as they are able: Each of which is a faithful and wise Servant, though he keeps not exactly

to

to the very words of his Maſter, and all agree in the drift and ſubſtance, though they differ in the expreſſion or circumſtance. So it is in the Evangeliſts, where they all agree in the material parts of the Hiſtory, though they differ often in the words, and ſometimes, perhaps, in ſome minute paſſages relating to it.

In one or other of theſe two ſenſes, the Scripture may be ſaid to be wrote by Divine Inſpiration; that is, either by immediate and verbal Suggeſtion, or by Direction: And this I ſhall now endeavour to prove, by anſwering the Third Queſtion, *viz.*

Q. 3. How we do prove the Books of Scripture, which contain the matter of Revelation, to have been of Divine Inſpiration?

In proceeding upon this I ſhall premiſe:

1. That the proper courſe for proving the Divine Authority of the Scripture, is to begin with the Matter, abſtracted from the Books, (as I have already done) and then to proceed from thence to the Books.

And therefore they begin at the wrong end, that would diſprove the truth of the Revelation, or Matter contained in Scripture, by ſuch Objections as they make from the Writing, and the Books. For the Matter ſtands upon a proof and

evidence of its own (as I have ſhewed) and will ſtand, though the written Word, or Scripture, ſhould fail of ſupporting its own Authority.

Therefore thoſe that will venture upon diſproving the Revelation, muſt in reaſon begin with the Matter; let them there try their skill, and call in queſtion the proof by which that is ſupported. But this we have already prevented, by having proved the Matter of Scripture to have been of Divine Inſpiration.

2. Though there ſeems not to be ſo clear and full a proof for the Inſpiration of the Books, as there is for the Matter, ſince the Matter has the utmoſt atteſtation it is capable of, *viz.* Miracles; but there were no Miracles wrought to prove theſe Books to have been of Divine Inſpiration, (as has been before obſerved): Yet if we prove that the Books were written by Inſpired Perſons, and that what they Wrote is the ſame with what they Taught, it is equivalent, and much of the ſame Force and Authority.

Serm. V. p. 12.

For what need was there of Miracles to prove the Books to be written by Inſpiration, when the Perſons writing them were Inſpired, and that what they wrote is the ſame with what they taught, and when what they taught was confirmed

firmed by the Miracles which they wrought?

Therefore while the Authors were in being, there needed no Miracles to prove these Writings to be theirs, when they themselves asserted them so to be: And after their decease we have as much reason to believe the Scriptures which they wrote to have been of Divine Inspiration, as what they taught to be a Revelation; both now depending upon the like Evidence, that is, Testimony, as to which we have no more proof of the Matter, than we have of the Books.

3. From hence it follows, That not to believe the Scripture to have been of Divine Inspiration, is in effect to reject and deny the Revelation therein contained: The Scripture being the best, and in the present circumstances of Mankind, the only means left for the conveyance of it; I say, in the present circumstances, it is the only means; for when the circumstances were other than they are now, or have been for Sixteen hundred Years and upwards, there was then no such absolute need of a written Word: When the Instructors of Mankind had their Lives protracted to a vast extent, as it was with the Patriarch's of Old; or when there were Inspired Persons alive to teach and rectify any mistakes that might arise and disturb the Peace of the

Church; as it was in the times of the Apoſtles.

But when things fell into an ordinary courſe, and that fallible Perſons (as all afterwards were) might miſtake in their reports of Doctrine, *&c.* and the weak memories of others not retain what they had been taught, and that the inſincere would wreſt what was taught to ſerve their perverſe deſigns; the caſe being thus alter'd from extraordinary to ordinary, ſo was the means of conveyance. And God, that committed the Divine Oracles to be taught by Perſons whom he thought fit to inſpire, employed the ſame Perſons to commit that Revelation to writing for the future Preſervation of it, and the conveying it down ſafe and intire to Poſterity. Without which Mankind, in theſe circumſtances, neither could themſelves have been certain of what they were to believe, nor could they have ſufficiently proved to others what it was they were obliged to receive and to believe, as wanting Authentick Monuments and Records for it. So that we have ſufficient reaſon to believe that the ſame Divine Goodneſs, that did make known his Will to Mankind, would take the beſt means, and did take the beſt means for the continuing and preſerving it.

And

And Scripture being the only means of that kind, becomes a Rule of Faith; and ſo is of Authority ſufficient to oblige us to receive and obey it.

If the Matter of Scripture be true and of Divine Inſpiration, we are obliged by it, though the Writing, or Book containing it, ſhould be only of Human Compoſition; becauſe it is the Doctrine, and not the way of delivery, that paſſes the immediate Obligation upon us: But when the Book containing that Matter, as well as the Matter it ſelf, is of Divine Authority, and compoſed by Divine Appointment, Direction, or Inſpiration, it obligeth us by vertue of the Compoſition, as well as the Matter; and both are to be jointly received as proceeding from one and the ſame Original and Authority.

But having aſſerted this, That the Scripture is the only means of conveyance of the Will of God to Mankind, and what becomes a Rule of Faith to us; it is fit to return to the Queſtion propoſed, *viz.*

How we can prove the Scripture to have been of Divine Revelation; or that thoſe Books, ſo called, were wrote by the Direction and Command of God, or by Inſpiration from him?

A. 1. I Anſwer in the ſame way as before, That as there is no Revelation, if the Scriptural Revelation be not that Revelation; ſo there is no written Revelation, if the Scripture be not that Book, and be not Inſpired. And then we ſhould want the only certain means of conveyance, which is Writing, or ſhould have been wholly left to the doubtful and uncertain hand of Tradition, for the knowledge and preſervation of Revelation.

Now, I think, this to be an Argument of conſiderable force for the Divine Authority of Scripture; that without this means we ſhould after a Revelation be in effect without a Revelation: For ſo it will be if the Scripture contain not that Revelation, and that we have no ſufficient Record, if that be not the Authentick Record of it.

But to come nearer the point.

2. I Anſwer, That there is as much proof for the Inſpiration of the Scripture, as the matter is well capable of, and as much as is ſufficient; and if that be ſo, then 'tis unreaſonable to reject it; for they who do ſo, can do it upon no leſs pretence, than that they would have ſuch a proof as the matter is not capable of, and more than is ſufficient for the proof of it. But that there is ſuch a proof for the Divine Autho-

rity

rity of Scripture as is ſufficient, I think, will be evident if we ſhew,

1. That the Scriptures have for proof of their Inſpiration, the Teſtimony of ſuch as were Inſpired.

2. That they were written by Perſons Inſpired, and that were Inſpired when they writ them.

3. That they are worthy of ſuch Authors, and have upon them the Characters of ſuch Inſpiration.

1. The Scriptures have for proof of their Inſpiration, the Teſtimony of ſuch as were Inſpired. The Teſtimony of Perſons Inſpired is as much a Proof of Inſpiration, as if it had been a matter they themſelves were Inſpired with; and therefore the Evidence that we have for the Inſpiration of ſuch Perſons, is a ſufficient Evidence for the Inſpiration they give Teſtimony to. As for inſtance, ſuppoſe that we have not as good evidence for the Inſpiration of the Old Teſtament as we have for the New; yet if the New doth juſtify the Inſpiration of the Old, quotes it as ſuch, and beſtows that Character upon it; then by vertue of ſuch a Teſtimony, we have as good Evidence for the Old as we have for the New. The meer Quotation

of

of a Book by an Inſpired Perſon, whether as to the Author, Words, or Matter, doth not give the like Authority to that with what he himſelf doth write by Divine Inſpiration; for then *Aratus* and *Menander*, *Epimenides* and *Callimachus*, who were Heathens, and are Quoted by St. *Paul*, would become Inſpired Writers.

Acts 17. 28. 1 Cor. 15. 33. Tit. 1. 12.

But the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament are cited by our Saviour and the Apoſtles as the Oracles of God, and as Books of Divine Authority, and which they produce and appeal to upon all occaſions in juſtification of the Doctrine which they taught: So we are told that *all Scripture*, πᾶσα γραφὴ, or the whole Scripture (as *Dionyſius Carthuſ.* expounds it) *is given by Inſpiration of God.*

2 Tim. 3. 15, 16.

And what is meant by the Scripture, is no other than what was generally received by the *Jewiſh* Church as ſuch, and which our Saviour diſtributes after their manner into the Three known parts, *viz.* The Law of *Moſes*, the *Prophets*, and the *Pſalms*: Which diviſion comprehended in it all the ſeveral Books; the Prophets containing not only the Books properly ſo called, but alſo the Hiſtorical, as written by Inſpired Perſons; and the Pſalms containing all the Poetical.

Luke 24. 44. V. *Joſephus con. App. l.* 1.

And

And they descend yet lower; for of the Thirty nine Books of the Old Testament, there are very few, not above Seven or Eight, but what are quoted in the New Testament by Name, or for some remarkable Passage, and as Books of the same Character.

So that if we can prove our Saviour to be infallible, and the Evangelists and Apostles inspired (as we have done before, when we proved the Matter revealed by them to have been of Divine Authority), at the same time we prove the Scriptures of the Old Testament to be of Divine Inspiration; because they had this Testimony and Credit given to them by those that were themselves Infallible and Inspired.

The like Testimony have we for the Divine Authority of St. *Paul*'s Epistles, by St. *Peter*, who gives them the same Title of *Scripture* with the Books that were of the *Jewish* Canon; *Our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you, as also in all his Epistles: ... Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as also the Other Scriptures.* 2 Pet. 3. 15, 16.

But though this be a good and sufficient Proof, where it may be had, yet it is not applicable to all; since the last of the Inspired Writers could have no such Evidence; as *Malachi* among the

Jews; and St. *John* in the Primitive Church, who ſurvived all the reſt of the Divine Penmen. And therefore where this Proof of the Atteſtation given to ſome is wanting as to others, we muſt have recourſe to other Arguments that will ſupply what is deficient. The Old Teſtament has the Teſtimony of the New to vouch for its Divine Authority; but what can thus teſtify to the New, when there is no other Revelation, and no Inſpired Perſons to come after?

But this will be help'd by the next Evidence, which is, That

2. The Scriptures were written by Perſons Inſpired, and that were Inſpired in the writing of them.

(1.) They were written by Perſons Inſpired: Thereby is meant, that whoever were the Authors, known or unknown, we have yet good and ſufficient Evidence that the Penmen were Inſpired both as to the Matter and Manner or Way of Writing. (But this belongs to another place.) Or that the Authors of thoſe Books were the ſame that before taught by Inſpiration.

That the Writers of the Old Teſtament were of this kind, we have already proved from the Teſtimony of the New, as far as that is of Authority to verify it.

And

And that the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, whom we have before proved to be Inſpired, were the Authors of the Books of the New Teſtament, we have as good Aſſurance as the *Jews* had that the *Pentateuch* was written by *Moſes*, or the *Pſalms* by *David*; or that ever there were ſuch Philoſophers as *Plato* and *Ariſtotle*, or ſuch Phyſicians as *Hippocrates* and *Galen*, or any Books writ by them.

Nay, ſo much the ſtronger Evidence have we, as it has been the Duty (as they thought) and the Intereſt of ſo conſiderable a part of mankind as the Chriſtians are, to preſerve theſe Records ſafe and entire, and to take care that they be ſuch in all points as they received them; and conſequently according to their ſenſe of them they are of Divine Inſpiration, and wrote by thoſe Inſpired Perſons. And for which there can be no greater Evidence than this ſort of Tradition; unleſs we would have God reveal to every particular perſon, That the Authors of thoſe Books were Inſpired; or point it out by ſome ſpecial Miracles, which ſhall ſerve as the Star to the Wiſe Men, to direct us to it.

But ſince this is wanting, and cannot reaſonably be expected, we muſt reſt ſatisfied with that which is the only poſſible Evidence, and

which not only the Primitive Christians did admit as sufficient, but was not contested by the most violent Adversaries of their Religion: Among whom the Question was not, Whether the Persons reputed to be Inspired, were the Authors of those Books? or, Whether those whose Authors are not known, were of the same condition with those that were known? but, Whether the matters of that supposed Revelation, and contained in those Books, were true, and that those Authors were sincere Relaters of it?

And whereas there were some Books of Scripture that were not so early and universally embraced as others, yet they were not so much doubted of as to their Authority, as the Authors, (such as the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, the second and third of St. *John*, and the *Revelation*); unless it were by the *Alogi* that *Epiphanius* writes of, who rejected the Works of St. *John* as not agreeable to their Opinion, That Christ was a mere Man.

V. Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 23. c. 24, 25. l. 5. c. 8. l. 7. c. 24, &c.

(2.) The Sacred Penmen were Inspired in their Writing, in the sense before spoken of, *p.* 4. For,

1. There was as much need to Write, as to Teach; to Write with respect to the absent, and to Posterity; as to Teach and Preach to the present;

preſent; for there is no other way to Teach in thoſe caſes, than by Tradition or Writing. But the Defect which thoſe Holy Men found all their Diſcourſes labour'd under as to their Conveyance by Tradition, through the infirmity of Human Nature, and an incapacity of tranſmitting the Matters now contained in the Scriptures, to future Ages in that way, without Prejudice, Corruption, and Abuſe, diſpoſed them, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to commit them to Writing. So St. *John* 20. 31. *Theſe things are written, that ye might believe.* So St. *Peter*, 2 Pet. 1. 5. *I will endeavour that ye may be able after my deceaſe to have theſe things always in remembrance.*

2. There was as much need to Write by Inſpiration, as to Teach by Inſpiration, for Writing is but another way of Teaching. And if the Apoſtles had the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt in all matters of moment when they Taught, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe (had we no other Evidence for it) that in the ſame Circumſtances they had the ſame Aſſiſtance in what they Writ.

Nay, ſo much the more might it reaſonably be expected, that they ſhould have the Aſſiſtance of that Divine Power operating upon their Minds, and guiding, as it were, their Pen in what

what they Writ; as what they Writ was to continue in the Church, and to be a Standard of Faith, and Rule of Life to all Ages: Whereas what they Taught could continue no longer than the Memories of fallible men could retain it.

So that we may conclude, That if they Taught and Preach'd by the ſpecial Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, they were alſo under the Conduct of it when they Writ.

3. Thoſe Divine Penmen conceived themſelves to be alike Inſpired in what they Writ, as in what they taught. Therefore we generally find the Apoſtles, and St. *Paul* always, unleſs when he writes in conjunction with others, to begin their Epiſtles with a Declaration of their Commiſſion and Authority by virtue of their Office, *Paul an Apoſtle*, &c. requiring the ſame regard and the like ſubmiſſion to what they Writ, as to what they Spoke when preſent.

Phil. 1.1. 1 & 2 Theſ.

And as they thus magnified their Office, ſo they writ as from Chriſt himſelf, after this and the like form, *Grace be to you, and peace from God our father, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, Rom. 1. 7, &c.

Nay, they inſiſt upon their Inſpiration, which they received when they writ, to gain it Authority with thoſe they wrote to. So St. *Paul*,

Gal.

Gal. 1. 1. *Paul an Apoſtle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jeſus Chriſt,* &c. Ver. 11, 12. *I certify you, brethren, that the Goſpel which was preached of me, is not after man; for I neither received it of man, nor was I taught it but by the Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt.* And that Apoſtle expreſly ſaith, *The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord,* 1 Cor. 14. 37. 2 Cor. 1. 13.

So St. *Peter,* 1 Epiſt. 5. 12. *I have written briefly, exhorting and teſtifying, that this is the true grace of God, wherein ye ſtand.*

Now if they conceived themſelves to be Inſpired in Writing, who themſelves were Inſpired (as has been before proved) and did Write with the ſame Apoſtolical Authority as they Taught, it is certain that they were Inſpir'd in Writing; for they were the beſt Judges of their own Inſpiration, and could beſt know when they were Inſpired. And therefore if any would undertake to diſprove the Divine Authority or Inſpiration of the Holy Scriptures, they muſt firſt of all prove that thoſe Writers were not inſpired, nor did ever give ſufficient Evidence that they were Inſpired. But if they were Inſpired, and do withal declare that they Wrote thoſe Books by Inſpiration, we have as much reaſon to receive thoſe Books as ſuch upon their Affirmation, as we have

have to believe that they themſelves were Inſpired, or did ever Teach by Inſpiration.

4. There is the ſame Proof for the Inſpiration of the Apoſtolical Writers, in their Writing, as their Teaching, as what they Write is the ſame with what they Taught; and therefore what they Taught being confirmed by ſufficient Evidence to be from God, ſo muſt what they Writ; the ſame Proofs that belong to the one, belonging to the other. And accordingly they in their Writings often appeal to what they Taught, as concordant with what they Writ, and to the Teſtimony given to the one for the confirmation of the other.

They appeal to what they Taught: So St. *Paul*, 2 Cor. 2. 13. *I write none other things to you, than what you read*, or know *and acknowledge*. So Gal. 1. 8, 9. *Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other goſpel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accurſed.*

So they appeal to the Evidences of their Inſpiration in Teaching, for a confirmation of what they Writ: So 2 *Cor.* 12. 12. *Truly the ſigns of an Apoſtle were wrought among you in all patience, and ſigns and wonders, and mighty deeds.* Gal. 3. 5. *He that miniſtreth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the Law, or the*

the hearing of Faith? From whence it is that the Apoſtles challenge the ſame regard to be paid to their Writings, as their Teaching; which they could not have done, were not their Writings of as good Authority as their Teaching, and were they not alike directed and aſſiſted in the one as the other. So St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. 4. 1. *Let a man ſo account of us as of the miniſters of Chriſt*, or Apoſtles. 1 *Cor.* 5. 3, 4. *I verily, as abſent in body, but preſent in ſpirit, have judged already as though I were preſent*, &c. *in the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, when ye are gathered together, and my Spirit*, &c.

All which is to give Authority to what they writ; but what Authority could that be of to oblige others to receive it, if they themſelves received it not by Inſpiration; and that their Teaching and Writing were not the ſame, and obtained in the ſame way?

3. The Holy Scriptures are worthy of ſuch Authors as were Inſpired, and have upon them the Characters of ſuch Inſpiration.

I have before proved, That the Matter contained in Scripture has upon it the Characters of a Divine Revelation. But the Deſign before us now is, to ſhew, That the Writing it ſelf has upon it ſuch Characters as *Lecture* V.

will entitle it to Divine Inſpiration, and is worthy of ſuch Perſons to write, as were Inſpired. And that,

1. If we conſider who the Perſons were that were the Penmen of the Sacred Writ; that were as well Ignorant and Illiterate, as Learned. Amos 7. 14. Thus we find in the Old Teſtament, an *Amos* that was no Prophet, nor Prophet's Son, nor bred up in their Schools, but an Herdman, and Gatherer of *Sycamore*-fruit, is made at once a Prophet, and as Inſpired, as the Great, the Noble, and Eloquent *Iſaiah*: And under the Goſpel, we find a *Matthew* and a *John*, as well as a *Luke*; a *Peter* as well as a *Paul*. For when the Workmanſhip proceeds not from the Hand, but the Intelligent Mind; not from the Inſtrument, but the Efficient; it is not what the Hand, the Inſtrument, and Agent is, but what the Efficient pleaſes; and ſo God could make an Apoſtle and an Inſpired Perſon out of an Illiterate Fiſherman, as well as out of him that ſate at the Feet of *Gamaliel*. For *God choſe the fooliſh things of the world to confound the wiſe, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty*, &c. *that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence*, 1 Cor. 1. 27.

And

And as it was in Preaching, ſo it is in Writing the Goſpel, in which God no leſs gave them a Mind to indite, than a Mouth and Wiſdom in Teaching, to ſpeak. So that they needed no more to meditate before, what to write, than in that caſe what they ſhould anſwer. It was there *as the Spirit gave them utterance*, and here as that did direct, and aſſiſt, or ſuggeſt. St. *Paul* exhorts Timothy, *to give attendance to reading*, till he himſelf ſhould come to give him farther Inſtruction; and to *meditate and give himſelf wholly to them, that his profiting might appear to all*, 1 Tim. 4. 13, *&c.* But we find no ſuch dependance on human means in what they wrote: Then it is *Paul an Apoſtle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jeſus, and God the Father*; the Goſpel he wrote was the ſame he taught; and which when he wrote, he no more received from man, than when he taught, and which he was *taught by the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt*, Gal. 1. 1, 11, 12. *Luke* 21. 14, 15.

And therefore where all was by Revelation, it was not as the Man was, but as he was made: And as St. *Peter* was as much an Apoſtle, an Inſpired Teacher, ſo he was as much a Divine Writer as St. *Paul*, and writes with the ſame Divine Power and Authority, and with as much Certainty and Infallibility.

So that there are as few Objections (if we strictly consider it) made against the most Illiterate as the most Learned of the Inspired Writers; against St. *Matthew* and *John*, as against St. *Luke*; against St. *Peter*, as St. *Paul*. But now if those Writers had wrote *after man* (in St. *Paul's* Phrase) and purely from themselves, As it was naturally impossible that ever those Unlearned Persons should apply themselves to study at the Age of St. *Peter*, and write of the most sublime Arguments more to the satisfaction of Mankind than the profoundest Philosophers; so it was impossible but that in their Compositions they should have been guilty of manifold Mistakes, when they wrote of such various Points, and Points of no small difficulty to explicate. But when the Unlearned of them are as free from Error as the Learned, and as little liable to exception in what they writ, 'tis evident they writ from the same Spirit with, and had the same Assistance as the Learned.

And therefore the supposed Errors in any of them could not proceed from Inadvertency, or Unskilfulness, or want of right Information; but are rather Errors supposed and imaginary, than real; the Mistakes of the Reader or Transcriber, rather than of the Penmen; as I have already shewed. (*Serm.* IV.) For

For if the Errors had proceeded immediately from the Writer, they would have appeared more in the Compoſures of the Unlearned than the Learned: But when the Unlearned are as free from them as the Learned, 'tis an unqueſtionable ſign that the Unlearned wrote from the ſame Spirit as the Learned, and both from a Spirit that is Divine.

2. The Scriptures will appear to be worthy of ſuch Authors as are Inſpired, if we conſider the way in which they are written, which though not with *excellency of ſpeech, or of wiſdom*, that is, human, yet have ſuch a Majeſty and Authority ſhining through the whole, as gives them a Luſtre as much beyond other Books, as the Bodies of Angels which they aſſumed for ſome ſpecial ſervice, excelled thoſe of Mortals, and that were of a Natural Compoſition; and of which we may ſay in the like Phraſe as *Nicodemus* of our Saviour, That none could write after this manner, *except God were with them.* 1 Cor. 2. 1, 4.

I freely acknowledge, that they are not written according to the ordinary Rules of Art and Method, which Almighty God is no more obliged to obſerve, than he is to govern the World by the Methods and Rules that are ordinarily obſerved among Mankind.

For

For as in the Government of the World, where there are different Ends to purſue, and divers Means to be made uſe of, God confines not himſelf to act as we would in ſuch caſes, but acts above all Rule known to us, and ſometimes puniſhes where we would ſpare, and ſpares where we would puniſh; ſometimes gives to thoſe that we would deprive of ſuch Favours, and deprives thoſe of them to whom we ſhould think fit to give: So it is in the Divine Compoſures, in which he makes uſe of different Hands and Inſtruments, as there are different Tempers in Mankind: He makes uſe of the Poetical Vein in *David*, the Oratory of an *Iſaiah*, the Ruſticity of an *Amos*, the Elegancy of a *Luke*, the Plainneſs of a *Peter*, the Profoundneſs of a *Paul*, to ſerve the common Deſign of inſtructing Mankind in the knowledge of God, and their Duty to him, without that Artificial Method which the Learned Part of the World expect to find, and think fit to obſerve.

The Heavens and the Earth have upon them the Signatures of an Almighty Power and Wiſdom, and which we may with *David* employ our moſt ſerious Hours in the Contemplation of, with Pleaſure and Advantage. But yet there is no ſtrict Order viſible to us, nor can be

be observed by us in the Situation of the Constellations; nor can we give a reason why *Orion* and the *Pleiades*, or *Arcturus*, are placed in that Quarter of the Heavens which is assigned them: And the Earth is not like a Garden laid out in order, but rather there seems to us a rude Variety in the disposition of it; and yet notwithstanding, who is there that doth not under all these seeming Disadvantages, find out the Traces of a Divine Original, and enough to entitle God to the Creation of all? And so it is in the Holy Scriptures, where there often seems wanting the Accomplishments of Human Eloquence, *the enticing words of man's wisdom*, and that Decorum and Artifice which the Books of Human Contrivance and Invention are embellished with: But as the Apostle saith, when he declined *the words which man's wisdom* (whether of Philosophers or Orators) *teacheth*, it was that their *Faith might stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*: So we may see under the Veil of a seeming Irregularity so much Beauty shining forth, and experiment so much Virtue proceeding from it, that it will evidently appear, that the less there is of Man in the Composure, the more there is of God, and that it can have none for its Author and Inditer but him; and which 1 Cor. 2. 4, 5.

Irre-

Irregularity can no more detract from the Authority and Divine Inſpiration of the Scripture, than it can be queſtioned whether the Sun be the Fountain of Light, becauſe of what we that are at a vaſt diſtance from it, call Spots. For we are at a great diſtance from the Apoſtolical Age, and much more from the lateſt times of the Inſpired Writers of the Old Teſtament, and ſo muſt needs be under ſome difficulties from our unacquaintedneſs with the Style and Way of Writing, as well as the Cuſtoms of thoſe Ages. And there will be therefore ſome Spots and Dark Places in them as there are in the Sun, not for want of Light and Elegance originally in them, no more than for want of Light in the Sun; but becauſe of ſome Deficiency in our ſelves, that are at a Diſtance, and under ſuch Circumſtances as intercept our Sight, and hinder us from making true and exact Obſervations. But if we could but ſtand, as we are to judge of Pictures, in the ſame Light in which they were drawn; and had lived in the ſame Ages in which thoſe Books were written, we ſhould be able to make a much truer Judgment, and penetrate much farther into the meaning of them, than we now can do.

But now though all the Parts of Scripture are not equally alike, but like the Inſpired Writers themſelves, of whom ſome were bred up in the Nurſeries of Learning, and others fetch'd from the Fiſhery and the Sheepfold; yet are they all plain in the ſame eſſential Doctrine, and in which the Salvation of Mankind is concerned.

And not only ſo, but the Style and Order of Words, if thoroughly underſtood as to their Propriety, Elegance, and Uſe, would be very ſurprizing (if we may judge of what we do not know, by what we do); which has not been unobſerved even by ſome of the Heathens. It was *Dionyſius Longinus* the Rhetorician, that admired the Majeſty and Sublimity of *Moſes*'s way of writing. It was *Amelius* the *Platoniſt*, that at the ſame time as he call'd St. *John* a *Barbarian* (a Title which the *Greeks* and *Romans* beſtow'd upon all but themſelves) found in his Goſpel the Wiſdom of a Philoſopher. *Euſeb. Præpar.*

But above all, we may ſee the Footſteps of a Divine and Extraordinary Aſſiſtance in the admirable Diſcourſes of our Saviour and the Apoſtles upon ſeveral occaſions. Let us, for inſtance, take a view of our Saviour's laſt Diſcourſe with the Diſciples juſt before his Death, as recorded by St. *John*, chap. 14. *&c.* Turn we again to

that of St. *Paul* about a Future State, and a Resurrection to it, which is the subject of 1 *Cor.* 15. See it again in the close and sensible Argumentations of the Author to the *Hebrews*. See it also in the very Digressions which those Holy Penmen sometimes, by breaking off from their Subject in hand for a while, do fall upon; where we shall find that which is equivalent to what is ordinarily said by the Prophets in the Messages they delivered, *Thus saith the Lord*, and what is as expresly said, and will as much be found to be of Divine Revelation. It was certainly as much an effect of the Divine Power to Direct, and Assist, and even Inspire those Writers with such sublime Notions, such convincing Arguments, as it was of the Divine Commission to send the Prophets with Authority to publish the Divine Commands and Decrees. And therefore it is a very frivolous Exception which a late Author makes against the Divine Authority of the Apostolical Writings, That they consist of long Deductions and Argumentations; whereas, saith he, *God doth not reason, but command*, as he did by the Prophets. But how often do we find in the Prophets God arguing with the *Jews* about the Vanity of their Idolatry, from the Incomprehensible Perfections of his Nature, *&c.*? How often using

Theol. Polit. c. 8.

using Arguments to convince them of their Immoralities and Impieties? How often exhorting them to Repentance and Reformation, from the most powerful Considerations? And therefore why are the Apostles less inspired for that reason than the Prophets? When God speaks to Men, and teaches one man by another, it is often after the manner of men; and therefore as he doth sometimes require absolute Obedience to his Commands, so at other times he condescends so far as to shew them the Equity and the Reasonableness of them, both equally becoming the Divine Majesty, and which are a glorious Instance of the Divine Wisdom conspicuous throughout the Holy Scripture; thereby adding both to the Excellency and the Usefulness of it; and advancing it in both above any Book in the World. And for this, take the Word of one (who is otherwise no Friend to our Religion, or to the Divine Authority of the Scriptures) though in contradiction to himself. *Anima Mundi*, Sect. 1.

"As the Lustre of an Oriental Diamond is "more clearly perceived when compared with "Counterfeit Stones; so Christianity appears in "its greatest Glory and Splendor, when compa-"red with the Obscurity of Paganism; the De-"formity of the one serving as a Foil to the

"other. Nor doth the Divinity of the Scri-
"ptures ever better appear, than when compa-
"red with the Follies of the *Talmud*, the *Alcho-*
"*ran*, or the Constitutions of the Heathen Law-
"givers; which is an infallible sign of their
"Excellence, that they so well bear the Test of
"Comparison. Thus far he.

IV. *General.*

How we prove the Books that are now extant, and received by the Christian Church as Canonical, to be those very Books that were writ by Persons Inspired?

Now this will receive a sufficient Answer, if we prove,

1. That there were once such Books.

2. That these are the very Books which were once said to be Canonical and Inspired.

3. That these Books are not corrupted, so as not to be the Books now which once they were.

1. The first of these is not denied by the most violent Adversaries, such as *Appion* was to the *Jews*, and *Celsus* to the *Christians*.

2. That these are the Books which were heretofore Penn'd by Inspired Persons, and received by the Universal Church as such, we have as much Evidence as we have or can have for any thing past or distant in time or place from us,

and

and which we our ſelves have not ſeen: And if we call in queſtion the Sufficiency of the Evidence, or the Truth of what is proved by it, we take away all the Evidence that we can have, and the Truth and Certainty of whatever has been, or is, which we have not ſeen our ſelves. So that either theſe are thoſe Books, or there is nothing of that kind which we can depend upon.

3. Theſe Books are uncorrupted, I mean, by Deſign, or by Accident.

If by Deſign, it muſt either be by *Jews*, *Hereticks*, or thoſe that are called *Orthodox*.

1. If by the *Jews*, that muſt either be before the time of our Saviour, or after it. If before, they would have certainly been taxed for it by our Saviour and the Apoſtles, who upon all occaſions appeal to the Scriptures; and yet never charge them with any ſuch Falſifications.

If they were corrupted by the *Jews* after our Saviour's time, How came they to leave thoſe Prophecies uncorrupted which manifeſtly and principally prove our Saviour to be the Meſſiah? For ſurely if they adulterated, or expunged, or added to the leſs, they would have offered as much violence to the greater. But it is evident the *Jews* were in a high degree ſuperſtitious, in preſerving the Copies of the Scripture ſound and entire.

V. *Hieron. in Galat.*

V. *Philo de Egreſſu Iſrael. ex Ægypto.*

Or

Or if they would have attempted this, how could they do it, and not be discovered and challenged for it by the Christians, who from that time forward had the Scriptures of the Old Testament in their custody as well as themselves?

2. It could not be by the Hereticks, because the Scriptures were soon dispersed over all the Christian World, and were read both in publick and private; and with that Care and Faithfulness, that they chose rather to part with their Lives, than become *Traditores*, and deliver up their Bibles to be burnt; and keeping then so watchful an eye upon them, they could not be perverted by their fraudulent Arts, but they would soon be observed and complained of; especially by those whose Office it was above others to study and preserve them.

Irenæus l. 1. c. 29. Tertul. contrà Marcion. l. 5. Epiphan. Hær. 42.

So when *Marcion* falsified the Text, he was presently detected and exposed for it.

3. Nor could it be by the Orthodox, if any of them were so weak as to think to serve their Cause by it: For as to the Old Testament, they were as watchfully observed by the *Jews*, as the *Jews* were by them; and both the Copies of the Old and New were so soon and so far dispersed, that neither could any one attempt it with any likelihood of success, nor all agree in it, when impossible to convene for it. And

And therefore when *Manichæus* and his Followers pretended the Corruption of the Scripture in their own vindication, they could not make out their Charge, though provoked by St. *Austin*, &c. to it. *Aug. de util. Cred. c.* 3.

Use. We may observe from hence, what a Blessing we enjoy above the Ages of Tradition, when the knowledge of the Truth was conveyed from hand to hand; which so sensibly declined, that the Truth was soon turn'd into Fable, and that so few Years after the Flood as the time of *Terah*, the greatest part of the World was overrun with Idolatry; so that for the retrieving it, God drew *Abraham* out of that infected Mass, and enjoined him to set up a Family separated from the rest of the World, that out of that he might constitute a Church for his Service.

But we have that which those Ages wanted; a Written and Certain Rule for our Faith and Manners; and that so plainly and intelligibly wrote, and so compleatly and entirely furnished with all things necessary for us to know in order to the Happiness of another Life; that as none in the Christian Church (where the Guides and Teachers are faithful to their Flock) can be or must unavoidably be ignorant; so neither can any person be defective in the knowledge of his Duty, or void and destitute of a power of doing

doing what is necessary toward his Happiness, unless by his own fault. If we keep but to our Rule, that is as an Infallible Compass to direct us, and we shall never fall short of knowing what God has revealed, or of obtaining what he hath promised.

And here we may farther reflect upon our Happiness in this Church, that we have not the *Key of Knowledge* taken from us, and the Truth lock'd up in an Unknown Tongue (as in the Church of *Rome*) but plainly and faithfully rendred in our own Language, for the Instruction and Edification of all.

What remains then, but that we make this our daily study, and labour to acquaint our selves with the Rich Treasures of Useful and Necessary Knowledge contained in those Sacred Repositories, and making them as *David* did, a *Lamp to our feet*, and endeavouring to conform our selves in all points to their holy Prescriptions; and then we shall most certainly have reason to rejoice in the Comfort of the Promises, and with Patience *look for that blessed hope and glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

To whom, &c. *FINIS.*

E R R A T A.

SErmon I. 2d Edit. *P.* 11. *l.* 4. *r.* manner. *P.* 13. *l.* 21. *for* only *r.* wholly. Sermon VI. *R.* 21 *Marg.* V. IV. *P.* 110. *l.* 11. *dele. both the* Comma's. *P.* 25. *l.* 12. *before and after* that is *dele* (,).

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